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RADIO TV REPORTS, II

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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

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SUBJECT Government Secrecy

STEVE BELL: Now, turning to our next topic for tonight, government secrecy. It's been a problem for every American President in modern times. Presidents like to tell the public what's going on; they don't like other people in government doing it without their say-so. And they especially don't like what are called news leaks that can be damaging, in their eyes, to American policy or to them politically. President Reagan is only the latest American leader to get angry because of news leaks and to try to do something about it. Last month President Reagan laid down a new policy for government employees that has angered a lot of people, both inside and outside the government.

Here's a report from Nightline correspondent James Walker.

JAMES WALKER: Lost Angeles, California, March 31st. President Reagan answers questions about government secrecy.

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN: What we're trying to control is what seems to be the favorite game of Washington, even more popular than the Redskins, and that is leaks.

WALKER: News leaks, unauthorized disclosures. President Reagan, like all Presidents, has bristled at every news leak he's heard or read. But the final straw, the story White House officials say really infuriated Mr. Reagan was reported last February by ABC News Pentagon correspondent John McWethy.

JOHN MCWETHY: ABC News has learned that the United States has secretly deployed four early-warning AWACS planes to Egypt on short notice, and has rushed the aircraft carrier Nimitz and three escort ships from the coast of Lebanon to Libya.